



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
2 NAVY ANNEX
WASHINGTON, DC 20380-1775

IN REPLY REFER TO:
CMC-MPP

03 Oct 96

WHITE LETTER NO. 12-96

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps
To: All General Officers
All Commanding Officers
All Officers in Charge

Subj: FIRST-TERM NON-EAS ATTRITION

1. Were it in my power, I'd increase your operating budget by a million dollars. If I could, I'd reduce the number of Marines I have devoted to recruiting duty and feed these top quality Marines back into the operating forces. If we could alleviate some of our critical MOS shortages, imagine what we could accomplish, and how PERSTEMPO could be reduced. While these may sound like dreams, all are possible if we can work towards reducing non-EAS attrition. Before I give you details on what I envision, allow me to reiterate a point you've heard me say on many occasions--we will keep no Marines who do not rate the title. What I'm asking for is a change in approach and your spirited application of the principles I have already stated in my planning guidance and will further articulate in this letter.

2. Every year, we lose one-third of our first-term force before completion of their initial contract. This is a significant loss of people and money spent training them. In today's environment of shrinking fiscal resources, and an increasingly competitive recruiting market, we cannot sustain these losses without jeopardizing our ability to maintain an active duty end strength of 174,000 Marines. The first year of a Marine's enlistment is the most critical. We currently lose approximately 17 percent of our new accessions in the first 12 months alone. This rate constitutes approximately 50 percent of all first-term, non-EAS losses. I have heard some Marines call non-EAS attrition the "*cost of doing business*." Let me quote some costs: \$40,000 to recruit and train a 3043 supply clerk, \$42,000 to recruit and train an 0311 rifleman, and \$76,000 to recruit and train a 2841 ground radio repairman. While figures of this magnitude tend to focus our attention on attrition at the recruit depots, Schools of Infantry, and the MOS producing schools, the remaining 50 percent of non-EAS losses occur outside of the entry-level training pipeline. I believe savings can be found in our commands as well.

3. Our recruiters are doing a superb job contracting quality recruits. However, our recruiters have shouldered the burden of maintaining our authorized end strength for too long. A new pillar incorporated into our motto of "taking care of our own" is

Subj: FIRST-TERM NON-EAS ATTRITION

now warranted. I want all leaders (from private first class to general) to adopt a mind-set that we have a responsibility toward our Marines and their families. Qualified applicants arrive at our recruit depots. Newly trained Marines arrive at their first duty station. **It is our implicit responsibility to take these Marines to the next level and get them to their EAS.** A concerted effort must be made by all Marine leaders to deter fellow Marines who begin heading in the wrong direction. This does not mean that we are going to tolerate having individuals of questionable integrity, corrupt morals, or demonstrated criminal behavior in our Corps. Those who cannot adhere to our high standards of honor, courage, and commitment will continue to be subject to administrative or disciplinary action when deemed appropriate by local commanders. Other types of non-EAS discharges are often beyond our immediate control. Examples of these include hardship and physical disability. However, a certain percentage of our Marines get involved in preventable predicaments. In some cases, these Marines can be turned around and successfully complete their contracts. They are your leadership target and NCO's are the key! Your charge is to make these Marines whole again. Simply put, we want to keep the Marines who are qualified (remember--every Marine does not have to be a superstar) to bear the title "Marine" and we need to continue to rid the Corps of those who do not meet our standards.

4. Reducing first-term non-EAS attrition is a collective responsibility. No leadership action is too small or insignificant to be tried. Several courses of action are already being pursued to stem the flow of non-EAS attrition as directed in my earlier planning guidance. The crucible, unit cohesion, and the whole transformation process are being instituted, in part, for their positive effect on reducing attrition. Other initiatives include instituting programs to better prepare poolees for recruit training and reducing the number of Marines separated for physical disability. I am confident that the understanding and resourcefulness of Marine leaders are our first and best weapons in combating this difficult problem.



C. C. K. A.